

Appendix A

Standing Boards

IFPM RESOLUTIONS BOARD OPERATING PROCEDURES

I. General

The IFPM Resolutions Board will: (1) review and decide on cases in which employees do not meet the *IFPM Standard* qualification, but believe their education and experience should be qualifying; and (2) review and decide on requests for extensions beyond the October 1, 2009 implementation completion date. The Board will render both types of decisions based on a fair and impartial review of the complete file. At its discretion, the Board may solicit comments and opinions from any party it deems appropriate, including the DOI and Forest Service Solicitor's Office and respective Human Resources Offices. In all cases, decisions rendered by the Board are final.

II. Step-By-Step Process for "Experience Only" Qualifications Determinations

- A. Initiation. Any affected employee (i.e., one whose position has been declared one of the 14 key fire program management positions) who has been determined to be not qualified for either (or any combination) of the four components of the *IFPM Standard* may file a request for a qualifications review by the Board. The request must: (1) be in writing; (2) contain specific reasons why the employee believes he/she should be determined to be qualified; and (3) be signed and dated by the employee. If available, the employee should also include the servicing Human Resources Office's qualifications documentation, the position description of record, and the IFPM or bureau standard position description (if appropriate). The employee should submit the package to his/her immediate supervisor.
- B. Immediate Supervisor's Responsibility. The immediate supervisor will: (1) review the employee's package, paying particular attention to the employee's written statement; (2) obtain (if necessary) and review the servicing Human Resources Office documentation; (3) prepare a statement reflecting the supervisor's opinion (i.e., agreement or disagreement with the employee's request); and (4) forward the complete documentation package to the next level of fire management within the Bureau. (Note: This review process will continue up the fire management chain until the package reaches the Bureau Fire Management Officer).
- C. The Fire Management Officers Responsibility. The Bureau Fire Management Officer (FMO) will review the documentation and, if deemed necessary, consult with Bureau fire management and Human Resources officials, and decide if the request merits forwarding to the Board. The Bureau FMO will document that decision (including the FMO's rationale) and either forward the package to the Board Chair, or return it to the employee via the same fire management chain of command).
- D. The Board's Deliberations. Once a request for review is received, the Board Chair will call a meeting (either face-to-face, or teleconference) as soon as possible. Copies of the entire package will be made available to all Board members. All five Board

members will be actively engaged in the deliberations. Although unanimity is the Board's goal for resolving each case, a simple majority vote will be the Board's last resort for making decisions.

- E. Issuing the Board's Decision. Upon reaching a decision, the Board will simultaneously issue copies (by US mail or secured interoffice/interdepartmental means as necessary) to: (1) the employee; (2) the employee's immediate supervisor; (3) the employee's servicing Human Resources Office; (4) the Bureau FMO; (4) the Bureau Human Resources Office; and (4) the organization's (DOI or FS) headquarters Fire Management and Human Resources policy offices.
- F. Current Situation Only. In instances where the Board rules that an employee is qualified for the targeted IFPM position, the ruling applies only to that position. Should the employee aspire to another position, a determination of qualification for that position must be made.
- G. Previous Bureau-Level Panel of Subject Matter Expert Decisions. In the event that an employee has been previously ruled eligible for a targeted IFPM position by a Bureau-level panel of subject matter experts, that employee's experience and education must be re-examined by the Board. Accordingly, once the servicing Human Resources Office re-examines the employee's qualifications and informs the employee that he/she does not meet the *IFPM Standard* qualifications, the employee should take action as explained in item II.A. above. The subsequent steps should be followed.

III. Process for Requests for Extensions Beyond October 1, 2009

- A. Similar to "Experience Only" Qualifications Decisions. The Board will entertain these requests only if the circumstances were beyond the employee's and management's control, as certified in writing by the Bureau fire management chain. One difference between this procedure and the one outlined in Section II above is that fire management may initiate a request for extension. The request must include clear statements as to how and why the circumstances were beyond the control of the employee and management.
- B. The Importance of Monitoring Employee Progress. Of particular importance is the need for fire management to actively monitor employees' progress toward meeting the minimum *IFPM Standard* requirements. The reason is that the employee or management should initiate the request for review as soon as possible after it is determined that the employee will not meet the requirements by the end of the implementation period. This provision is especially important in the event that new hires brought on well into the implementation period do not meet the *IFPM Standard* requirements.

IV. Timelines

Once a complete review request package is received, the Board will make every effort to complete its study and render a decision within 60 days of receipt. If it is necessary to gather additional information or clarification that is not included in the package (e.g., by conducting interviews), the Board will expect to render a decision within 90 days.

GS-0401 EDUCATION/TRAINING ASSESSMENT BOARD OPERATING PROCEDURES

Assessment Board Protocol

1. The GS-0401 Education/Training Assessment Board (Assessment Board) will meet annually to review course assessment requests, and to resolve any issues related to the process. The Assessment Board will operate as stated in their charter, which has been approved by the Federal Fire Training Task Group (FFTTG).
2. DOI/DOA Participation. Every attempt will be made to have both the DOI and DOA represented at all board meetings. This is especially important when assessments or other important decisions are made.
3. Acting Board Members. Board members should make every effort to attend all meetings. However, it is acceptable to utilize an Acting who has been briefed prior to meeting attendance.

Course Assessment Process

1. Definition: *Course Assessment Process* - fact finding or gathering of information used to ascertain whether prospective coursework meets the criteria established by the Office of Personnel Management for the Supplemental Qualification Standard for the GS-0401 Fire Management Specialist.
2. Course assessments will be conducted annually by the GS-0401 Education/Training Assessment Board to determine if prospective coursework should be included or removed from Attachment 3, *Other Education Creditable Towards 24 Semester Hours Requirement of the Supplemental Qualification Standard for the GS-0401 Fire Management Specialist Position*. The Assessment Board was specifically established to accomplish this task pursuant to the Supplemental Qualification Standard for the GS-0401 Fire Management Specialist position.
3. A standard template has been created for course assessment requests. This template, called a *Course Assessment Request Form*, is available electronically on the IFPM website. Requests will be accepted electronically or via fax. All requests will come through one of the five (5) federal land management agencies. Appropriate agency channels will be utilized for course assessment requests. This will ensure that the submitting agencies' national office is in concurrence with the request.
4. One of the five (5) federal land management agencies may submit a request on behalf of other federal, state, or non-profit partners. No requests will be accepted from contractors unless the contractor has entered into an agreement with one of the five federal land management agencies.

5. The course assessment process (see flow chart) explains the steps involved in the review of prospective coursework to determine if it meets the criteria established by the Office of Personnel Management for the GS-0401 series.
 - a) Requests for course assessments from the five federal land management agencies are due to the Assessment Board by February 1 of each year.
 - b) The Assessment Board will meet once a year in the spring, to consider and screen course assessment requests.
 - c) The Assessment Board forwards course assessment requests to the panel of college professors for evaluation. The panel of college professors will have two months (approximately March-April) in which to evaluate the requests.
 - d) Consensus is reached between the Assessment Board and the panel of college professors approximately April-May annually.
 - e) Assessment Board recommendations will be presented to the NFAEB, with a final decision regarding updates to Attachment 3 (which provides a list of creditable courses from other than an accredited university or college that can be used to satisfy the educational requirement), being made by NFAEB prior to October 1 annually.
 - f) Updates to Attachment 3 will be published October 1 annually.

Initial Screening of Course Assessment Requests

1. The Assessment Board will conduct an initial screening of all course assessment requests to ensure that prospective coursework meets the basic requirements established by the Office of Personnel Management for the GS-0401 series.
2. The basic requirements for the GS-0401 series are outlined in the *Qualification Standards for General Schedule Positions Operating Manual* published by the Office of Personnel Management, and must be used as an initial screening for course assessment requests. In order to be creditable, the GS-0401 series basic requirements include subject matter related to biological sciences, natural resources, wildland fire management, forestry or agriculture.

College Professor Involvement

1. A list of college professors utilized in the course assessment process will be maintained by the Assessment Board. Only professors from institutions of higher learning recognized by United States accrediting organizations will be used. Databases of these institutions of higher learning that are accredited are available on the Internet. Three professors will comprise the panel at any given time period. Professors utilized on the panel will specialize in wildland fire education, as stated in the *Supplemental Qualification Standard*.
2. Partnerships with more than three accredited organizations will be maintained by the Assessment Board to ensure that at any time at least three professors will be available to assist the federal agencies with the course assessment process. Compensation for the professors' work will be negotiated between the professors and the Assessment Board.

Use of Subject Matter Experts

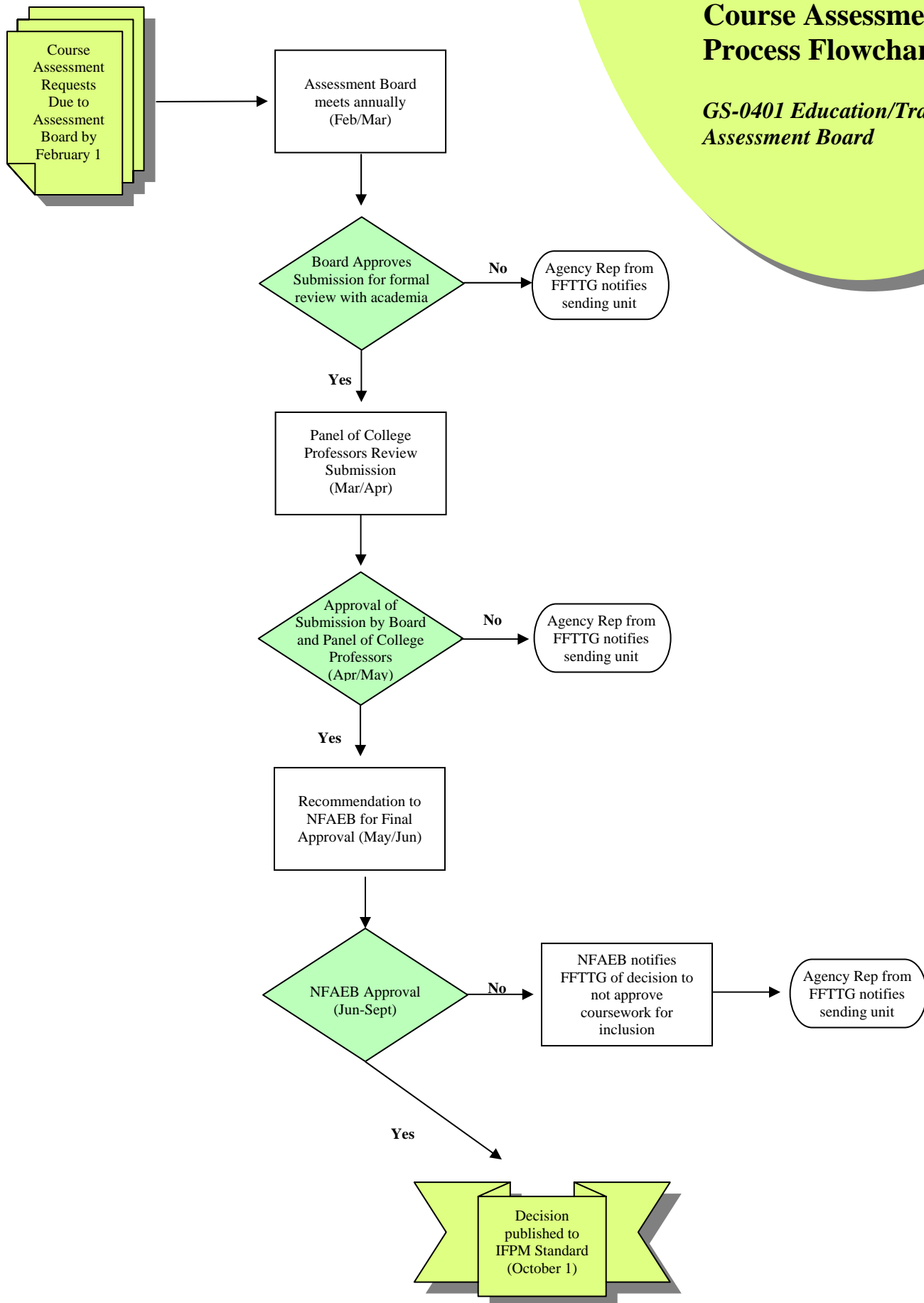
1. The Assessment Board may request assistance from subject matter experts as needed to deal with course assessments in a specific functional area. A contact list of regionally or nationally recognized subject matter experts will be maintained by the Assessment Board by functional area.

Maintenance of the *IFPM Standard and Guide*

1. The Assessment Board will have the additional responsibility to ensure that updates are made to the *IFPM Standard* until 2009. This includes **all** updates, not merely those pertaining to the GS-0401 Education Requirement. Updates will not alter the original intent of the *IFPM Standard*.
2. The following deadlines/process will be followed to ensure timely updates are made:
 - a) February 1: Change Request Deadline. All change requests are due to the Assessment Board.
 - b) April 1: *IFPM Standard* Revision Deadline. If changes are minor, the Board will incorporate changes into draft documents to be forwarded to FFTTG for review. If changes are major, subject matter experts may be engaged to complete tasks. Editorial assistance if necessary will be provided to the Assessment Board by the FFTTG.
 - c) June 1: FFTTG Review and Final Edit Deadline. The FFTTG will review the changes made by the Assessment Board to the *IFPM Standard*, make any final edits to these changes as necessary, and forward the updated final draft to the NFAEB for approval.
 - d) September 1: NFAEB Approval of IFPM Changes. Deadline for NFAEB approval of the updated version of the *IFPM Standard*.
 - e) October 1: Deadline for Publishing of Updated *IFPM Standard*. The FFTTG will be responsible for ensuring that the updated, approved *IFPM Standard* is published by October 1, annually.

Course Assessment Process Flowchart

*GS-0401 Education/Training
Assessment Board*



IFPM Revision Process Flowchart

*GS-0401 Education/Training
Assessment Board*

